

PFAS Risk Communication Toolkit

Risk communication and engagement are critical for the EPA to effectively support communities across the country that are addressing PFAS issues. As a result, *EPA's Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Action Plan* calls for the creation of a risk communication toolkit in 2019. As an aid in moving forward with the toolkit, this document lays out a plan for developing a toolkit to help communities better understand PFAS and the steps EPA and its partners are taking to address this environmental challenge.

What We Know So Far

Through interviews, community meetings, and discussions, state, local, and tribal agencies and organizations have indicated they will use the EPA PFAS risk communication toolbox to share information with their communities. Specifically, they requested:

- Consistent messaging from local to federal level.
- Clear definition of PFAS.
- Toxicity levels and what they mean.
- Actions the EPA is taking.
- Actions that the public can take.

To provide this information, the *PFAS Action Plan* identifies the following tools:

- Key messages.
- Questions and answers.
- Infographics.
- Fact sheets.
- Sample language/template for potential notifications.
- Sample communication materials.
- Links to data sources and tools.

Topics

Starting in Fall 2019 and continuing throughout the following year, EPA will develop and distribute tools that effectively communicate about PFAS with communities. These tools will address the following topics:

Considerations: Reading level, preferred methods of communication (both format and where they look for health information), level of concern about the issue, cultural variations, information sought, goals for the risk communication process, role in the risk communication process (and whether there is any disconnect with the goals), hot buttons/triggers.

1. General PFAS information:
 - Q&A-style basic information fact sheet. **(OPA)**
 - Expand on the set of Q&As available to the public on the [epa.gov/pfas](https://www.epa.gov/pfas) website.
 - PFAS by the numbers/fast facts infographic. **(ORD/OW/OCSP)**
 - Update: [[HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-03/documents/pfasv15_2pg_0.pdf"](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-03/documents/pfasv15_2pg_0.pdf)]
 - General health/exposure fact sheet.

- Risk vs. benefits
- Cross link to *PFAS Action Plan* fact sheet (updated on an ongoing basis).
- Federal, state and local roles and coordination, including enforcement authorities (could be a separate fact sheet). **(OPA/OECA/OLEM/OW/OCSP)**
- PFAS research areas (already developed, add link). **(ORD)**
 - Understanding uncertainty and emerging areas of science.
- CDC/FDA/USDA PFAS websites/fact sheets (already developed, add links). **(OPA)**
 - CDC: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/info-for-health-professionals.html>"]
 - FDA: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.fda.gov/food/chemicals-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>"]
 - DOD: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.denix.osd.mil/army-pfas/home/>"]
 - NIEHS: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/pfc/index.cfm>"]
- Children's health fact sheet. **(OCHP)**
- Map of federal government-related activities and coordination.
- 2. Develop templates for drinking water utilities, local communities and Superfund/federal facilities sites. Templates to include the following: **(OLEM/OW)**
 - Drinking water information and other notifications (work with USDA and FDA).
 - Superfund information and advisories.
 - Press releases.
 - Talking points for community meetings.
 - Social media.
 - Key messages.
 - Graphics that show and explain risk.
 - Community engagement tips.
- 3. Press kits. **(OPA)**
 - Pull information from above set of materials that can be shared with reporters for background in a sharable format.
- 4. External engagement and review. **(OW)**
 - Identify reviewers who can help provide external feedback. (e.g., LGAC, CHPAC, SAB, ECOS, E-Enterprise, community groups)
 - Explore the use of focus groups, as needed, on specific products and/or to get feedback on what documents are necessary.
- 5. Tool dissemination. **(OW/OLEM/OPA/OPEE)**
 - Identify effective ways to disseminate tools. (e.g., townhall meetings, one-on-one discussions, web, social media, library placement)

Other Considerations

- **Timing.** The Action Plan promises toolbox initial completion in 2019, so tool creation will be on a rolling basis.
- **Regulations.** Fewer than 10 individuals (or groups?) can be surveyed without OMB approval. Advisory committees require chartering.

- **Community involvement.** Certain citizen groups are concerned that the process isn't moving with greater urgency and stricter outcomes. They may welcome involvement in the risk communication effort or feel the role is too limited for their concerns.

Partner Engagement and Coordination

Contact water quality or public health organizations for review of this document and ask for list of external materials that could be linked to and/or used in the risk communication toolkit. The following organizations were contacted by EPA's contractor at the start of this project. All expressed interest in helping develop risk communication materials:

- Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
- Association of State Drinking Water Administrators
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)
- American Water Works Association

In addition, the agency will engage with the following organizations:

- Environmental Council of States (ECOS)
- Association of Clean Water Administrators
- National Tribal Toxic Council
- Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials

Key Messages (Message Maps Attached)

1. PFAS are a group of chemicals used in many products.
2. Certain PFAS can pose risks to human health and communities.
3. One of the ways we can be exposed to PFAS is through drinking water sources.
4. Federal, state, tribal, and local partners work together to protect drinking water and public health.
5. The EPA is working to understand PFAS and reduce risks from them.
6. You can take steps to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

Other PFAS Resources

ASHTO

- [HYPERLINK "<http://www.astho.org/Environmental-Health/Water-Safety/Risk-Communication-of-Waterborne-Contaminants/Communicating-the-Risks-of-PFAS-Colorado-Department-of-Public-Health-and-Environment/>"]
- [HYPERLINK "<http://www.astho.org/Environmental-Health/Water-Safety/Risk-Communication-of-Waterborne-Contaminants/Communicating-the-Risks-of-PFAS-Minnesota-Department-of-Health/>"]
- [HYPERLINK "<http://www.astho.org/Environmental-Health/Water-Safety/Risk-Communication-of-Waterborne-Contaminants/Communicating-the-Risks-of-PFAS-New-York-State-Department-of-Health/>"]
- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.ecos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MIPFASCaseStudy-1.pdf>"]

- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.ecos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NHPFASCaseStudy-1.pdf>"]
- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.ecos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PAPFASCaseStudy-1.pdf>"]

States

Minnesota: [HYPERLINK

"<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/topics/pfcs.html>"]

Michigan: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/>"]

Colorado: [HYPERLINK "<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/pfcs>"]

A more thorough search would likely identify others. Note that linking shows respect, but if EPA develops no tools of its own, some state, local, and tribal agencies may show concern that EPA is not providing sufficient effort to communicate.

General Risk Communications

EPA has extensive resources on risk communication in general that could be mined for additional information:

- [HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/community_culture.pdf"]
Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place (outstanding reference on working with communities to understand audience needs)
- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide>"]
Public Participation Guide (focused on international, but nonetheless great insights into working with the public)
- [HYPERLINK "https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_report.cfm?Lab=NRMRL&dirEntryId=137551"]
Risk Communication as a Risk Management Tool: A Risk Communication Workbook (though focused on behavior change, the workbook shares a number of tools that could be modified for PFAS risk communication)
- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-cyanotoxin-risk-communication-toolbox>"]
Drinking Water Cyanotoxin Risk Communication Toolbox (good example of what we're likely trying to do for PFAS. Note, however, that cyanotoxins are a natural risk, while PFAS are not. This difference could affect the kinds of information needed and community response to it.)
- [HYPERLINK "https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_report.cfm?Lab=NRMRL&dirEntryId=64244"]
Risk Communication in Action: Environmental Case Studies (possibly useful for interagency risk communication team?)

- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/communication-resources-small-drinking-water-systems>"]
Communication Resources for Small Drinking Water Systems (fact sheet that might be adaptable for PFAS toolbox)
- [HYPERLINK "<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/mapping-tools-communities-identify-assets-and-hazards-local-areas>"]
Mapping Tools for Communities to Identify Assets and Hazards in Local Areas (approach that might work for mapping tool promised in Action Plan)